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AP Literature and Composition

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Othello Excuse Writing

Desdemona,

Please excuse Othello for his irrational behavior this past Tuesday. As you most likely have realized, Iago played quite a large role in convincing Othello that you were being unfaithful to him. You see, Iago had planted such a fertile seed of jealousy in Othello that he felt trapped and betrayed, which caused him to act out in the way he did.

In confidence, I tell you that Iago did at first insinuate to Othello that you were in the secret company of Cassio. He said to Othello, “Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio” (III.iii. 202). Oh, please understand that Iago was very cunning in his persuasion of Othello, for he never said the exact words. Instead, the alternative proved much worse, as it allowed the jealous Othello to use his imagination and make his own assumptions. Iago talked of proof and made many suggestions about you and Cassio. In fact, I believe the root of Othello’s undoing took the form of a wedding present. Yes, the embroidered handkerchief Othello gave to you as a token of his love and affection. You may not realize it, but Iago planted the handkerchief in Cassio’s rooms, and I am afraid that once Othello saw Cassio with the handkerchief, he could contain his jealousy no longer. Of course, you had thought your handkerchief lost, and so when Othello questioned you as to its whereabouts, he did not believe you had truly lost it. He asked for the handkerchief back, while you kept persisting that Othello should reinstate Cassio as lieutenant until finally, Othello cursed and left in a jealous rage (III.iv.88). This didn’t help matters at all, and served to send Othello over the edge.

I hope you do not blame Othello for his actions, because he was so trusting of traitorous Iago he had very little reason not to believe him. Iago had been Othello’s ensign for a long period of time, and had never given Othello even the smallest reason not to trust him. Iago seemed loyal to Othello, always offering advice and support. If only we had known how deceiving he could really be…When Iago pointed out to Othello the close relationship you had with Cassio, I am sure Othello believed Iago had only his best interests at heart. After listening to Iago’s concerns, Othello even thanked him, saying “I am bound to thee forever” (III. iii. 218). Othello truly had no idea that Iago was trying to lead him astray, and you cannot blame him for trusting a person who has always appeared to be a loyal friend and ensign.

Finally, put yourself in Othello’s position: How would you feel if you thought Othello had betrayed you? The man was crushed that the love of his life had chosen someone else, his second in command no less. Othello was torn apart by your supposed infidelity, and acted in the only way he saw -fit to your crimes. Were his actions rash? Yes, absoloutely. But Desdemona, would you not act rashly if you discovered your husband loved someone else? The most important thing is that Othello, once realizing his mistake, felt horribly guilty and apologetic. Othello is dead now, leaving me to ask your forgiveness of him. Please remember that Othello loved you enormously, and was tricked and deceived into believing the worst of you. I hope you and he are happy and together now.

Sincerely,

A Friend